



NEWARK REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY

*Misc.
1989*

5
DECADES
OF
SERVICE

NEWARK REDEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING AUTHORITY

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Safe, decent, sanitary and affordable housing. It's something that most Americans take for granted.

But, for the thousands of lower income and elderly residents of our city, the private housing market is anything but affordable. For more than 50 years, the public housing program has been the most efficient and effective vehicle this country has for providing shelter for these two populations.

Created by the Federal Housing Act of 1937, the Housing Authority of the City of Newark is one of the largest public housing authorities in the nation and the largest housing authority in the State of New Jersey. In 1988 we housed more than 30,000 low-income and elderly residents in 12,000 units.

Over the years we have been asked not only to be effective landlords, but to solve the wide range of social problems prevalent in the nation. Problems such as crime, drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, high school

drop-outs and domestic violence all are magnified in the public housing population. Our tenants are subject to the same ills as the rest of the population, but they have fewer personal resources to call upon in overcoming them.

We have lived through an era in which the federal government attempted to build as much low-income housing as inexpensively as possible within our cities. This effort resulted in the construction of high-rise family units where large numbers of very low income people were grouped. Families lost control over their immediate surroundings and drug-related crime prevailed.

We looked at the reality of life in public high-rises for families with young children and found it unacceptable. We realized that we could not reasonably expect the federal government to provide enough funding for the maintenance, modernization and security of these buildings anytime in the future.

In 1985 the Housing Authority of the City of Newark produced a plan to guide the future development of the agency. It was accepted by tenants, the business community, the Mayor and City Council. The plan called for the relocation of all families with young children to low-rises or townhouses and the eventual demolition of the agency's high-rise family projects.

We are now well along in this plan. We have demolished four buildings at Scudder Homes and are about to demolish five buildings at Columbus Homes. We have completed the construction of 390 townhouses, have 372 townhouses in various stages of construction, and are presently awaiting approval of an additional 197 townhouse units.

I strongly believe that the living environment provided by these townhouses will make a vast difference in the lives of the children

raised in them. Families will have far greater control over their immediate surroundings and will not have to deal with the drug-related crime prevalent in the high-rises they came from. We are trying to build the townhouses in small clusters in well-established neighborhoods. In doing so, we hope to maintain a well-balanced income mix within the immediate community and remove the stigma that has become associated with living in public housing.

In Newark, we have come a long way in the last five decades and we firmly believe that we have made a difference in the lives of many low-income Newark residents. Our goal remains to provide shelter for low income families until they are able to afford to enter the private market. Public housing must not become a permanent home for a permanent underclass.

But the need for low-income housing is just as great today as it was when the program was formed. Homelessness is once again a problem of epidemic proportions and affects all areas of the nation. We must all draw attention to the need for an increase in federal funding for the construction of new public housing units.

While we try to obtain a greater commitment on the part of the federal government, we have begun to pursue other avenues for the construction of low-income housing units. We must form partnerships with the city, the state and the private sector to make such construction a reality.

Our charge for the future is to add the word "quality" to the mission of the Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority and to add the word "pride" to the feelings of Housing Authority tenants.

Dr. Daniel W. Blue, Jr.

THE 1940s



■ **1940:** Pennington Court, the first public housing complex constructed under provisions of the Federal Housing Act of 1937, was dedicated on April 27, 1940. Tenancy restricted to families making less than \$18.46 a week for two people and up to \$24.04 for a family of seven. Monthly rents were \$20.50 to \$21.75 with heat, gas, electricity and hot water.

Two other public housing units opened that year:

- Stephen Crane Village, 900 Franklin Avenue
- Bradley Court, 46 North Munn Avenue

■ **1941-1946:** Six additional complexes built:

- Seth Boyden Court, 124 Seth Boyden Terrace (1941)
- Baxter Terrace, 25 Summit Street (1941)
- Hyatt Court, 2 Roanoke Court (1942)
- Felix Fuld, 142 Rose Street (1942)
- Terrell Homes, (formerly Roosevelt Homes) 35 Riverview Court (1946)

■ **1942:** Average monthly rent for families in Baxter Terrace was \$20.05, \$13 less than the average of \$33.36 for the city. Average apartment size was two bedrooms.

■ **1943:** Based on the third annual re-examination of income, Pennington Court rents were increased for 190 of 236 families. Average rent increased to \$35.31.



CHRONOLOGY:
US HOUSING ACT OF 1949

THE 1940s



AN NHA PROFILE — Walter Chambers

THE 1940s



Bell Atlantic Assistant Vice President Walter Chambers has an understanding of public housing that few of New Jersey's corporate executives can claim. You see, Walt grew up in Newark's first public housing project.

At age 11, Walt, his mother and his grandmother moved into a brand-new, three-room apartment at Pennington Court. The rent was \$20.50 a month. Walt learned to play baseball in the well-landscaped quadrangle surrounded by the four low-rise buildings of Pennington Court.

"There was no stigma attached to living in public housing in those days," he said. "We considered ourselves lucky to get in. The first Pennington Court residents were refugees of the Depression—we had middle class backgrounds and value systems but we were economically poor.

"There was a real sense of community at Pennington Court. People had respect for each other and for public housing property. The grounds were well-kept and, as kids, we dared not trample the shrubs or deface the property."

Walt remembers the days when the Housing Authority would inspect apartments to make sure residents were keeping them up. He recalls the "victory gardens" on the quad where Pennington Court residents grew

vegetables without fear of damage or vandalism.

Walt lived in the East Ward's public housing project all during his school years and returned to his mother's apartment for his summer vacations from college. In fact, Walt's mother lived there for more than 45 years until her death in November 1988.

"I tried many times to persuade her to move to senior citizen housing where she would have the company of others her own age but she always refused. Although the nature of the neighborhood did change over the years my mother always felt safe and secure at Pennington Court," he said.

In 1982 Walt was instrumental in organizing a Pennington Court reunion which reunited many of the development's original residents.

THE 1950s



HOUSING PROJECT N. J. 2-19
COURT STREET

- **1952:** Newark's Urban Renewal Program began. Fifty-eight acres declared blighted, cleared for construction of new neighborhood of nearly 3,000 new apartments and facilities. Future site of Columbus Homes.
- **1953:** Faced with increasing demands for public housing from low-income residents, The Federal Government abandons policy of low-rise development in favor of high-rise construction. Eight-story Kretchmer Homes, 71 Ludlow Street, became first public housing buildings with elevators.
- **1953-1959:** Four new high-rise complexes followed:
 - Walsh Homes, 1945 McCarter Highway (1953)
 - Hayes Homes, 68 Boyd Street (1954)
 - Columbus Homes, 112 8th Avenue (1956)
 - Stella Wright Homes, 159 Spruce Street (1959)
- **1954:** Newark Housing Authority is the first public housing agency in the nation to initiate a social work program within its own framework. Tenant Relations Division created to aid tenants with social, family or personal problems in receiving proper assistance. Series of innovative programs introduced.

**CHRONOLOGY:
THE HOUSING ACT OF 1954**

**THE HOUSING AMENDMENTS
OF 1955**

THE HOUSING ACT OF 1956

THE HOUSING ACT OF 1959



AN NHA PROFILE — Betty Crews McNeil

THE 1950s



Betty Crews McNeil was barely out of her teens when she interviewed for a job at the Newark Housing Authority in the fall of 1952. A friend of her mother told her that she could help her get the job, but that she would have to do the work necessary to keep it. No problem, Betty thought, she was only interested in working for a short time anyway.

Today, more than 36 years later, Betty is one of the Housing Authority's most senior employees. From her first job as a receptionist in the tenant selection office to her current post in contract administration, Betty has devoted her career and her energy to providing decent public housing for the residents of the City of Newark.

According to Betty, her sensitivity to the needs of public housing residents stems from the fact that she has "walked in the other man's shoes." Betty grew up in public housing and her parents currently live in James C. White Manor.

Many of Betty's working years were spent in local management offices. She has worked with tenants at Stella Wright, Walsh and Scudder Homes.

During the past three decades Betty has seen Housing Authority management come full circle.

"In the early years, project managers had direct responsibility for their projects and could make the decisions necessary to keep things running smoothly," she said. "Later, that responsibility was dispersed, the tenant population grew, and local conditions began to deteriorate. Now that responsibility is being restored to the local level, conditions are beginning to improve."

Comparing today's public housing population with that of her youth, Betty said that current public housing residents have to learn to take more pride in themselves and in their surroundings.

"When I was a kid, we took care of the neighborhood and took pride in the property even though it didn't belong to us," she said. "It all starts in the home. Kids have to be taught to respect themselves before they can respect the rights of others and take pride in their neighborhoods."

Betty is optimistic that under the new administration, the Housing Authority will begin a new era of prosperity.

THE 1960s

THE 1960s

Community Relations Division created "Most significant development of the decade was acknowledgment on the part of the federal and local governments that the social aspect of project life is as important as the physical aspect." (1969 annual report)

- **1962-1969:** Important breakthrough in Newark public housing. First apartments especially designed for the elderly constructed and opened for occupancy
 - Kretchmer Homes Elderly, Van Vechten Street (1962)
 - Hayes Homes, Elderly 68 Boyd Street (1962)
 - Stephen Crane Elderly, 16 Cedar Lane (1962)
 - Scudder Homes Elderly 89 Lincoln Street (1963),
- Scudder Homes 165 Court Street (1963)
 - Kretchmer Homes Elderly, 963 Frelinghuysen Avenue (1968)
 - Stephen Crane Elderly, 900 Frank in Avenue (1968)
 - Stephen Crane Elderly, 801 North 6th Street (1968).
 - Seth Boyden Elderly, 27 Foster Street (1969)
 - Seth Boyden Elderly, 839 Frelinghuysen Avenue (1969)
- **1967:** Tenant Relations and Community Relations combined in one unit as Community Relations and Social Services Section (CRSS). Appointment of John Garrett as coordinator gave further impetus to involvement and participation by Housing Authority in the improvement of the social condition of the needy residents of the city
- **1967:** A national wave of urban unrest and the frustrations of poverty ignite riots in Newark. The riots prompt a mass exodus of business from the city, which erodes Newark's tax base and has a negative, long term impact on public housing.
- **1967:** Public Housing youngsters recruited to participate in pilot project, Columbus Homes Auxiliary Police Force Under supervision of Newark Police Department, program was designed to offer community security, better community-police relations and career direction to youth
- **1967:** Neighborhood Youth Corps introduced. A supervised work experience and job training program for youngsters ages 14-22 who were in school or had dropped out.
- **1967:** First Tenant Associations formed in Newark public housing developments to expand resident involvement. Tenant Leagues formed at Columbus, Hayes, Scudder, Stella Wright and Walsh Homes.
- **1969:** Public housing tenant population reaches 37,683

CHRONOLOGY THE HOUSING ACT OF 1961

THE HOUSING ACT OF 1964

THE HOUSING ACT OF 1965

THE DEMONSTRATION CITIES AND METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1966

THE 1968 HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACT

5 -

D E C A D E S



AN NHA PROFILE — Ida Clark

THE 1960s



It was 1963 when Ida Clark moved from a wood-framed flat, where her oven was often the only source of heat, to Scudder Homes.

With her four oldest children already on their own, Ida moved into a two-bedroom apartment where the rent was \$80 a month.

"Scudder Homes was beautiful then," she remembers. "It was like starting a new life. My youngest daughter was thrilled to have her own room."

It's been more than 25 years since the Clarks moved to Scudder Homes and both mother and daughter have come a long way from their cold water flat. Ida served two terms as chair person of the Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority's Board of Commissioners and her daughter has graduated from college, has a family of her own, and now works at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.

At 67, Ida was the first tenant in the history of New Jersey public housing to head a governing board. She is a strong advocate of low-rise town-houses for families.

"I raised my daughter in a high-rise and I know how difficult it can be to supervise children playing outdoors when mothers are in apartments 13 floors up. Common hallways also make it difficult to control people coming in and out of family buildings," she said.

In addition to her formal work as a Commissioner, Ida has become the self-appointed "grandmother" to many public housing residents. Her door is always open to people in need.

"I've always wanted to do something to help other people," she said. "Sometimes all you have to do is take the time to talk with them or give them a hug just to let them know someone cares about them."

She tells a story about one young man who spent his youth hanging around the high-rise hallways "doing drugs." She took the time to talk with him and encourage him to do something productive with his life.

"I saw him go to jail and return to the projects and I still talked to him," she said.

Today that young man is a college graduate and has a good job and a family of his own. He invited Ida to his college graduation.

An active member of Newpoint Baptist Church for more than 50 years, Ida attributes her vitality to her love of God. "God is my inspiration. He's what keeps me going."

Although she spends every day of the year helping her public housing "family," Ida reserves one day a year especially for her own family. Every January she treats her five children, 31 grandchildren and at last count 19 great-grandchildren to a New Year's feast day in the cafeteria of her building.

"And I do all the cooking," she said proudly.

THE 1970s

- **THE 1970s** brought new directions in development methods.
- **Scattered Site Housing**: a concept of locating individual, low-rise, low-density housing units in still solid neighborhoods
- **Turnkey Construction**: a building development method in which private contractors, under closely defined bidding procedures, take responsibility for construction, turning it over to the Authority upon completion
- A new section of the Federal Housing and Community Development Act replaced all other federally funded assistance programs, providing both new construction and substantial rehabilitation
- The Urban Renewal Program became an important instrument in strengthening the city's economy by rejuvenating commercial districts. Newark became a regional office and transportation hub. Successes included the Gateway complex and the Blue Cross/Blue Shield building.
- Unprecedented growth in colleges and universities made Newark the "education center of New Jersey."
 - Newark College of Medicine and Dentistry constructed campus on urban renewal site \$189 million investment
 - Rutgers University built new campus
- **1970 - 1973: Stella Wright Homes** tenant strike. Longest rent strike in history of public housing. Led to creation of Resident Management Corporation, first tenant management company in Newark public housing.
- Newark College of Engineering expanded and became New Jersey Institute of Technology
- Forty-seven acre Essex Heights Urban renewal site became new campus of Essex County Community College
- New Seton Hall Law School was built on the northern side of Raymond Boulevard
- Section 236 of the Housing and Community Development Act provided for the construction of moderate and mid-income housing on urban renewal land by non-profit sponsors such as community groups and non-profit corporations
- **1971:** The Brooke Amendment provided that no family living in federally-subsidized public housing need pay no more than 25% of its income for rent.
- **1971:** Newark Tenant Council organized
- **1972:** First tenant elected to Newark Housing Authority Board of Commissioners.
- **1974:** Housing and Community Development Act created a massive eased housing program utilizing private sector
- **1976:** James C. White Manor was constructed at 516-18 Bergen Street
- **1978:** A scattered site at 147 Rose Street provided housing for 104 families and Branch Brook Manor added 200 units of public housing.

CHRONOLOGY

THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1970

THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1974

THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1977

THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1978

A NHA PROFILE — Kay Gelpke

THE 1970s



Paperwork—it's a fact of life in any public institution. Standing between the Newark residents who need housing and the federal government that provides housing funds are reams of applications, contracts and resolutions. Thanks to the Housing Authority's Kay Gelpke, the paper mill has run smoothly for the past 36 years.

As the legal department's office supervisor, Kay's job is "never boring." She is responsible for processing contracts for legal review, preparing resolutions for submission to the Board of Commissioners, and getting her portion of the paperwork back to the "Feds" as quickly as possible.

Currently a Parsippany resident, Kay grew up in the Hill and Roseville sections of Newark. She began her career in the Authority's development and maintenance office in 1952 when the first high rise projects were under construction. She has witnessed the rise and fall of the city's high-rise housing.

"We all had high hopes for the high rise units," she said. "There was no room in Newark to spread out so our only hope was to go up. But the

high-rises concentrated too many people in too small a space and we're now moving back to low-rise townhouses."

Kay recalls the financial difficulties that caused public housing officials "to lose sight of what public housing was all about."

"Project managers used to be very close to the tenants," she said. "They knew every tenant and could recognize and name the children by sight. Later there came a time when managers just stayed in their offices and had little tenant interaction. Today, project managers are once again getting involved with tenants."

THE 1980s

- 1980: Newark Housing Authority, in cooperation with HUD and Mayor's Policy and Development Officer, offered free homeowner counseling service
- 1980: Construction began in Newark's industrial Meadowlands, creating new jobs and tax rates for the city
- 1981: Mini-police precinct constructed in Scudder Homes to increase security in high-rise complex



THE 1980s



- **1981:** Housing and Community Development Act establishes new rent levels for public housing - 30% of income
- **1982:** Public housing tenants around New Jersey demonstrate at HUD office in Newark to protest cutbacks in Federal public housing subsidies
- **1983:** HUD authorizes \$27 million to help modernize Newark's public housing complex, one of the largest authorizations ever made to the city used to upgrade and reopen 1,250 previously uninhabitable vacant apartments
- **1985:** Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority issued five-year Master Plan for revitalization of Newark's public housing system. Plan included substantially reducing number of high rise units and replacing them with mix of townhouses and low-rise apartments
- **1987:** Scudder Homes was partially demolished to make way for lower density, low-rise housing. Ground broken for new townhouse development in 1988
- **1987:** Major Housing Authority restructuring cut operating costs and increased efficiency

- 1988: H. D endorsed \$15.5 million Housing Authority request to fund modernization of 2,000 public housing units.
- 1988: Housing Authority Newark Board of Education Scholarship Foundation created. First six public housing high school graduates received scholarships.
- 1988: First modular public housing unit erected in Newark.

CHRONOLOGY

THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1980

THE HOUSING AND URBAN RURAL RECOVERY ACT OF 1983

THE HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 1987



AN NHA PROFILE — Evelyn Vargas

THE 1980s



It was a "dream come true" for Evelyn Vargas when she and her two young children moved into Newark public housing's first single-family modular home in October 1988.

The house assembled in a Pennsylvania factory and placed on a 50- by 67-foot lot on College Place, is part of a pilot project that housing authority officials say will lead to hundreds of others.

Evelyn grew up just around the corner in Scudder Homes, where four high-rise buildings were demolished in 1987. Her new home is part of the Housing Authority's plan to replace those units with modular homes and low-rise townhouses.

Moving day found Evelyn "overjoyed" and that joy was shared by her three-year-old daughter Anise who is thrilled to have her own bedroom. With three bedrooms, a kitchen, living room, dining room and 1 1/2 baths, Evelyn, Anise and infant Michael Anthony have plenty of room to spread out.

Joining Evelyn to christen her new home were Newark Mayor Sharpe James and City Council President Henry Martinez, NHA Executive Director Daniel Blue, NHA Commissioners Ida Clark and Anthony

Camino, and a host of Housing Authority officials.

"We have reviewed all kinds of housing development and searched for months to find replacement units that are durable and affordable," said Blue. "I think we've found it. The Vargas family will have a real home with a driveway, a yard and will live on a street where non-public housing exists."

Construction of the Vargas home proves that using modular housing saves money and allows tenants to be relocated more quickly. The Vargas home cost about \$80,000—a little more than half of what a conventional home would cost. And, modular homes can be occupied in as little as three to four days after the units are installed and sealed.

Putting the units up quickly also brings savings in the area of construction-site security.

While the College Avenue home represents the look of the future for Housing Authority officials, for Evelyn and her children it's simply "home sweet home"—at last.

The Newark Housing Authority Board of Commissioners



Ida Clark - Chairperson



Anthony J. Ammiano



Anthony Carrino



James A. Johnson



Ralph L. McNeal, Sr.



James Orange



William D. Payne



**NEWARK
REDEVELOPMENT &
HOUSING AUTHORITY**



NHA EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS



Harold Lett, Acting Secretary

Neil J. Convery

Sargent Dumper,
Acting Secretary Treasurer

Frank B. Wenrich

Carl A. Baccaro

Arthur O. White,
Acting Executive Director

Louis Danzig

Joseph D. Sivolella

Augustine J. Kelly,
Acting Executive Director

Robert Notte

Hugh R. Hill,
Acting Executive Director

Milton A. Buck

Daniel W. Blue, Jr.

April 27, 1938 to June 21, 1938

June 21, 1938 to May 1942

June 1942 to November 1942

November 1942 to November 1, 1946

November 13, 1946 to May 1948

May 12, 1948 to July 1, 1948

July 1, 1948 to June 1969

June 1969 to February 15, 1972

March 3, 1972 to August 4, 1972

August 4, 1972 to April 1978

May 1978 to July 1979

July 1979 to December 1988

January 1989 to Present



STATISTICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Public Housing Units

<u>Name of Unit</u>	<u>Year Built</u>	
SETH BOYDEN COURT (COMPLEX)	1941	KRETCHMER HOMES (COMPLEX)
124 Seth Boyden Terrace		1953 71 Ludlow Street
Seth Boyden Elderly	1969	Kretchmer Homes Elderly
27 Foster Street		1962 35 Van Vechten Street
Seth Boyden Elderly	1969	Kretchmer Homes Elderly
839 Frelinghuysen Ave.		1968 963 Frelinghuysen Ave.
PENNINGTON COURT	1940	WALSH HOMES
214 South Street		1953 1945 McCarter Highway
BAXTER TERRACE (COMPLEX)	1941	HAYES HOMES (COMPLEX)
25 Summit Street		1954 68 Boyd Street
Baxter Terrace	1967	Hayes Homes Elderly
25 Summit Street		1962 68 Boyd Street
STEPHEN CRANE VILLAGE (COMPLEX)	1940	COLUMBUS HOMES
900 Franklin Avenue		1956 112 8th Avenue
Stephen Crane Elderly	1962	BRADLEY COURT (COMPLEX)
60 Cedar Lane		1940 46 North Munn Avenue
Stephen Crane Elderly	1968	Bradley Court II
900 Franklin Ave.		1983 46 North Munn Avenue
Stephen Crane Elderly	1968	STELLA WRIGHT HOMES
801 North 6th Street		1959 159 Spruce Street
HYATT COURT	1942	SCUDDER HOMES
2 Roanoke Court		1942 165 Court Street
FELIX FULD	1942	JAMES C. WHITE MANOR
142 Rose Street		1976 516-18 Bergen Street
TERRELL HOMES	1946	SCATTERED SITE
35 Riverview Court		1978 147 Rose Street
		BRANCH BROOK PARK MANOR
		1978 1 Branch Brook Plaza
		TOWNHOUSE UNITS
		Ongoing



Newark Redevelopment And Housing Authority

57 Sussex Avenue
Newark, New Jersey 07103-3992
(201) 430-2430